



Board of Trustees Meeting

July 18, 2023

Attendance: Kurt Merkle, Michael Amy Cira, Ben Baxter, Laurie Reed, Gwynne Movius, Bob Gorman, Craig Miller, Kathleen Carpenter, Lisa Bovee Kemper, Kelly Greene, Alesia Hutto

Guests: Margie Storch (GreenFaith), Barry Ahrendt (observer)

Absent: Shannon Maples

Chalice words: Michael

Mission, Vision, Leadership Covenant

GreenFaith Request: Power Down the Crown – This is a City of Charlotte program to allow it to meet climate goals (10% reduction by 2030). Power Down the Crown is for non-City groups such as nonprofits, companies, faith organizations, etc. that operate in buildings. The City asks participating organizations for an anecdote to cite how they have improved energy efficiency (UUCC has many examples to share including solar panels). Organizations also report their energy usage (electric, natural gas) at least annually, but recommended more often. Current partners include Novant, CPCC, UNCC, Trane, Nucor. Those who pay attention to energy usage often become more efficient and this is an effort to involve the entire community

UUCC's GreenFaith is asking permission to enter UUCC data in this initiative. We would be included along with other non-City organizations on the City's dashboard. We would be the first faith community to join and could model for others. Margie has not heard whether other faith groups are considering it.

GreenFaith members are willing to input the data; a City staff person will walk them through it. City will also confirm data with UUCC before adding it to the City dashboard. Margie will take the lead initially and designate a backup. She will work with Alesia to obtain monthly data and will try to minimize Alesia's administrative burden.

There is no requirement to obtain a 10% reduction by 2030, but GreenFaith will review results from the 2015 energy audit for additional improvement opportunities. They recommend Building & Grounds do the same.

The motion to join Power Down the Crown passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes from June 2023 BOT Meeting - June minutes were approved unanimously.

Revisiting June items we had marked for follow-up/parking lot: the Board agreed that after a brief discussion of such items, we should delegate them to the appropriate team for further discussion regarding whether additional conversation/action is needed. These will be included in the summary of action items at each meeting. We need to ensure we receive a response from those teams.

Eyes and Ears

Covenant – The discussion this week went very well. It was a full house. Just by showing up, UUCC members indicated that they recognize there is conflict and yet it's important to them to remain in community.

- There seems to be a need for additional discussion of Article II issues.
- We also need to practice being in community and having constructive conflict – active listening, not taking things personally, etc. Kelly has been working on a curriculum about how to have difficult conversations.
- Covenant has not been of much discussion here at the UUCC so there will be a learning curve. Best practice is to have the Covenant policy include a team that exists to educate and help implement the Covenant.

Community Sundays – still hearing positive comments. There seemed to be fewer children last Sunday; many families are out of town.

CT Report (Membership report only)

Nice to see new members on the membership report. New families are continuing to join.

Our net downward trend has been like that of other faith communities. Last fiscal year also was the first year since Covid that had Board removals, so there were more losses than we would typically see, but from people who had stopped participating even prior to the pandemic.

Creation of a BOT Text Message Chain - A text chain would allow for quicker communication of immediately pertinent information – e.g. need to miss a meeting or meet remotely, prodding to respond to an email, etc. We want to avoid significant conversation over text. This would be for Board members only.

Response to Letters to the Board (follow-up from June Eyes and Ears)

How should we respond to future such letters? Generally, the Board should discuss before a full response. It's appropriate for individual Board members to acknowledge receipt and that we will have further conversation with the Board and get back to the writer. Best practice would be for one of the Co-Chairs to provide a quick acknowledgment of receipt. If it needs immediate follow-up, the Board will need to have a special meeting or delegate a response.

Regarding the two letters that still require a full response: Kurt and Rev. Lisa are already making plans to meet with one of them. Several Board members also responded privately. Rev. Lisa will reach out to the second letter writer for a better understanding of how we can best respond to their request.

Covenant of Right Relations and Article II - The Board requested an overview from Rev. Lisa about the Article II conflict and how we are using the Covenant to respond (e.g. as seen in some escalating conversations of various topics in the Facebook member group). Following are her observations and group discussion:

- Staff has been active in reaffirming group rules on the Facebook page.
- Article II is serving as a lightning rod for expression of conflicts that have been surfacing for several years (even prior to Article II) regarding decisions about who we are as a community (both UUA and UUC), how we are talking about intersectional justice, what commitments we are willing to make, and how we express our vision and mission.
- Covenant is the starting point for us to get better at communicating and listening around these topics.
- Prior to General Assembly (GA) in June, staff worked to share as much information about Article II as possible and to get the congregation engaged in the process. Now that GA has voted to move Article II into a year of study, UUC will also participate in that year of study, e.g.: How will we interact with the potential new language? What would the values mean to us? What would it mean to enact these values in our day-to-day lives as UUs?
- We also need to acknowledge and make space in the conversation for those having a deep internal struggle with these changes:
 - Is there a way they can bring in what they feel is being left behind?
 - We need to address grieving and loss resulting from changes to the Principles, along with acknowledging loss from all the other UUC changes over the past five years. People can't process change until they can grieve.
 - Some of the fear and hurt regarding the loss of Principles is related to identity; the Principles for many were how we knew we belonged as UUs. We want members to know they still belong, and we want to expand the way we articulate who we say we are so that marginalized communities (who don't feel they belong based on the current Principles) will also feel included.
 - Board members and staff have heard concerns about "accountability" and what that means, including a fear that there will be a "purge" if they don't "fall in line," e.g. with social justice efforts. Some are also concerned about being called racists.
 - Accountability in a relational capacity (rather than a corporate/capitalist one) is about being accountable to each other for things we have agreed to, the boundaries and expectations we have set for ourselves in relation to each other. There are usually policies, practices, norms, and procedures for managing conflict. Conflicting parties can choose whether to participate, but the main part of being a covenanted community is agreeing to stay at the table in conversation even when things get hard.
 - Rev. Lisa has developed a plan to allow members to identify/discuss their fears and receive clarification about misinformation. We will also continue to draw a line at harm.

- Rev. Lisa would like us to return to the draft Right Relations policy from last year, tabling the discussion about restorative practices that pulled us off track. Restorative practices are a longer-term goal but right now they are unknown to our system. We need a clear, concise, actionable policy to support accountability of the covenant that allows us to set needed boundaries and convene a team charged with implementing the policy/covenant, educating the congregation, and in the long term, bringing in restorative practices (less judicial way of dealing with conflict). It will evolve as the congregation continues to evolve. We will build into the policy an aspiration to start on that path.

Revised Interim Goal-Setting

Rev. Lisa shared refined/updated goals for the congregation to complete in the interim period, based upon her sixth-month assessment. The Board prioritized the two bolded goals:

- **Engage more with grief/loss around recent events (including departure of ministers/staff, pandemic changes, and recent conflict)**
- Continue post-shutdown work re-engaging and re-envisioning ways to build community and strengthen relationships
- Clarify roles, responsibilities, and accountability relationships throughout the organization
- Increase accessibility, clarity and transparency of communications (including website updates, written processes, etc.)
- **Prioritize implementation of congregational covenant**
- Explore and implement shared ministry model (the congregation seems to want more shared ministry, and most ministers will expect it)
- Re-introduce mission, vision and ends to congregation to increase awareness

These goals were presented in a sermon and can be discussed further with the congregation as needed. Goals will be broken down into actionable items that can be delegated to the Board, staff, and teams via the Trello project management app.

Trello Introduction

Rev. Lisa provided a demo of Trello, which will allow us to monitor our progress on the interim goals. There should be time at the August Board Retreat to begin building out tasks.

Board Table in Freeman Hall

Near the end of last fiscal year, Board members began making themselves available in Freeman Hall each week after the service. We didn't receive a lot of interaction but it's important to be visible. The new Board needs to decide a plan going forward.

For September, we will maintain a presence with two members each week and will re-evaluate after that. This needs to be publicized and announced from the pulpit to increase awareness. This is a good opportunity for "eyes and ears" as well – any conversation is good conversation between members and the Board.

Summary of action items as needed for the coming month

- Kurt and Rev. Lisa will follow-up for additional discussion with the members who sent letters.
- Rev. Lisa will send all Board members a link to access Trello.
- Kurt will add the Trello link to the OneDrive.
- Login credentials for OneDrive will be sent out to new Board members.
- Shannon will follow-up regarding a text chain and a schedule for the Board table.

Meeting adjourned